

33 July 1962

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122312Z JUL 79

TO RUEKOC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 4745

INFO RUOMGU/AMEMBASSY 44XBPB 2712

RUMJPC/AMEMBASSY BEIJING 2547

RUS600/AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD 3252

RUDTC/AMEMBASSY LONDON 1711

RUEHNO/AMEMBASSY MOSCOW 1752

RUS2AE/AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI 7147

RUFNPS/AMEMBASSY PARIS 1134

100

BUENOS AIRES

20

ST
00 48 109 N T I A L S E R I A L

CINCPAC ALSO FOR POLAD

E.O. 12812: SDS 7/29/95 (TAYLOR, JAMES E.) 00-0

TAGS: PINR, PINS, PINT, AF

SUBJ: (U) CABINET RESHUFFLE UNLIKELY TO DEFUSE PROTEST
OPPOSITION

REF: XABUL 5 SEP (NCTAL)

1. (C) SUMMARY: THE POTENTIALLY MOST SIGNIFICANT OF THE NEW CABINET APPOINTMENTS IS HAFIZULLAH AMIN'S RELINQUISHMENT OF THE FOREIGN AFFAIRS PORTFOLIO AND HIS APPARENT FUTURE ROLE AS "ACTING" DEFENSE MINISTER. THE OTHER PLAYERS ARE OLD FACES, AND IF THESE CHANGES WERE DESIGNED TO PROVIDE A MEANINGFUL "NEW LOOK" TO THIS EMBATTLED REGIME, THEY ARE IN THEMSELVES INADEQUATE TO PACIFY THE GROWING DOMESTIC OPPOSITION. END SUMMARY.

2. (LOW) THE NEW COUNCIL OF MINISTER APPOINTMENTS ANNOUNCED JULY 28 ARE: DR. SHAH WALI (FORMER DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER AND MINISTER OF PUBLIC HEALTH) AS DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER AND MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS; DR. SALEH MOHAMMAD ZIRI (FORMER MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE AND LAND REFORM) AS MINISTER OF PUBLIC HEALTH; DR. ABDUL RASHID JALILI (FORMER MINISTER OF EDUCATION) AS MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE AND LAND REFORM; MAJOR MOHAMMAD ASLAM WATANJAP (FORMER MINISTER OF DEFENSE) AS MINISTER OF INTERIOR; SHER JAN MAZDOORYAR (FORMER MINISTER OF INTERIOR) AS MINISTER OF FRONTIER AFFAIRS; SAHEB JAN SAHRAEE (FORMER MINISTER OF FRONTIER AFFAIRS) AS MINISTER WITHOUT PORTFOLIO; AND, MOHAMMAD SALEM MASSOODI (FORMER AMBASSADOR TO BULGARIA AND, VERY BRIEFLY, FRANCE) AS MINISTER OF EDUCATION.

3. (C) COMMENT: THE DRA'S PREVIOUS DAY'S ANNOUNCEMENT (REPEL) THAT PRESIDENT NOOR MOHAMMAD TARAYI WAS TAKING OVER "PERSONAL CONTROL" OF THE AFGHAN MILITARY FORCES, BUT DELEGATING TO HAFIZULLAH AMIN RESPONSIBILITY FOR PROSECUTING THE REGIME'S COUNTERINSURGENCY CAMPAIGN AND AUTHORITY OVER THE DAILY AFFAIRS OF THE MINISTRY OF DEFENSE, CLEARLY INDICATED THAT THE CURRENT LEADERSHIP PERCEIVED THE BATTLE AGAINST THE DOMESTIC OPPOSITION AS ITS PRIMARY TASK. GIVING THE FOREIGN MINISTRY PORTFOLIO TO SHAH WALI -- THE THIRD-RANKING POLITICAL FIGURE IN THE COUNTRY -- DOES NOT REPRESENT ANY EROSION IN THE POLITICAL AUTHORITY OF AMIN, AND OBVIATES THE NEED FOR AMIN TO UNDERTAKE ANY FOREIGN TRAVEL AT THIS SENSITIVE JUNCTURE. ON THE CONTRARY, AMIN'S ENHANCED ROLE IN COMBATING "FOREIGN AGGRESSION," COUPLED WITH SHAH WALI'S APPOINTMENT, SUGGESTS THAT AMIN WILL NOW HAVE EVEN MORE TIME TO DEVOTE TO THE DOMESTIC SCENE.

4. (C) ALTHOUGH IT WAS NOT OFFICIALLY ANNOUNCED THAT AMIN WILL CARRY THE TITLE OF DEFENSE MINISTER, WATANJAR'S DEPARTURE TO INTERIOR LEAVES LITTLE DOUBT THAT AMIN WILL AT LEAST SERVE AS "ACTING" MINISTER OF DEFENSE. IN THIS REGARD, SOME OBSERVERS WERE BELIEVE THAT THE TRANSFER OF PROFESSIONAL MILITARY OFFICER WATANJAR WAS MADE IN ORDER TO PRECLUDE ANY MOVE BY THE AFGHAN MILITARY TO SEIZE POLITICAL POWER WITH THE MORE OF DEFENDING DOMESTIC STRIFE. (IN THIS CONNECTION, WATANJAR PLAYED A LEADING ROLE IN BOTH THE 1973 AND 1978 COUPS.) OTHERS, HOWEVER, FEEL THAT THE DETERIORATING SECURITY SITUATION WERE REPRESENTS PRIMA FACIE EVIDENCE OF WATANJAR'S INABILITY TO ACHIEVE POSITIVE RESULTS, AND, ACCORDING TO THIS REASONING, AMIN HAD TO STEP IN IF THE REGIME WERE TO HAVE ANY REAL CHANCE OF REVERSING ITS FORTUNES.

5. (C) IF THESE PARTICULAR CABINET CHANGES WERE DESIGNED TO PROVIDE A "NEW LOOK" OR "BROADER BASE" TO THE REGIME, AND THEREBY "MOLLIFY" THE OPPOSITION IN SOME MANNER, THEY IN THEMSELVES ARE VOCEFULLY INADEQUATE, AND WILL PROBABLY HAVE LITTLE, IF ANY, IMPACT ON THE COURSE OF DOMESTIC EVENTS. THE GOVERNMENT PLAYERS INVOLVED HAVE BEEN ON THE SCENE SINCE THE REVOLUTION FIFTEEN MONTHS AGO, AND WE ANTICIPATE THAT NO ONE WILL TAKE ANY COMFORT FROM THIS "OLD WINE IN NEW BOTTLE" APPROACH. IT REMAINS TO BE SEEN, OF COURSE, WHETHER AMIN'S DIRECT PARTICIPATION WILL PRODUCE SIGNIFICANT PROGRESS IN ELIMINATING THE INSURRECTION, BUT AT THE LEAST, HIS NEW RESPONSIBILITIES APPEAR TO PUT HIM IN CLOSER CONTACT WITH THE MILITARY FORCES WHICH CONSTITUTE THE INCREASINGLY CRUCIAL TOOL KEEPING THE DRA-HOUSE STANDSTILL. INSURRECTION